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Letter No. 2306

April 2, 1987

PROSPECTIVE
PLANTINGS

Here are some highlights of prospective plantings for 1987, based on voluntary responses to a U.S. Department of Agriculture survey of over 70,000 farmers and ranchers. The intended feed grain plantings - including corn, oats, barley and sorghum - totals 106 million acres, down 11 percent from 1986. The area planted to food grains - including wheat, rice and rye - totals 69 million 500 thousand acres, down 10 percent from 1986. Oilseed acreage - including soybeans, cotton, peanuts, sunflower, and flaxseed - is expected to total 71 million 100 thousand acres, down 6 percent from 1986. (For more statistical state-by-state info, call 202-447-2127.)

SUBSIDIZED
FRENCH CORN

United States corn exports to Tunisia, Morocco and other North African countries may face increased competition from European Community corn, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Sales of French corn for nearby delivery have been confirmed with an export subsidy of about \$145 per ton, bringing the French price to about \$72 per ton FOB. While this is about the same price as U.S. corn, EC corn has lower transportation costs. This sale marks the beginning of commercial EC corn exports that could reach 750,000 tons to North Africa and the Middle East. These areas have traditionally purchased most of their corn from the U.S.

U.S. CORN TO
JAPAN

Japan appears to be relying less on corn from China, Argentina and South Africa. The reported U.S. corn sales of nearly 3 million tons to Japan in the past seven weeks are about three times the level during this period last year, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Reports of short Argentine exportable supplies and the apparent unwillingness of the Chinese to sell at the current world prices may have caused Japanese buyers to turn to the U.S. for corn.

CANADIAN CROP
INTENTIONS

Canada's 1987/88 exportable supplies of barley and durum wheat could increase, recent statistics indicate planting intentions are up 18 percent for durum and 10 percent for barley over last year's levels, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture. However, total wheat planting intentions dropped about 7 percent, which could relieve pressure on Canada's growing stocks of common wheat.

CCC RATE -
6 PERCENT

Commodity loans disbursed in April by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Commodity Credit Corporation carry a 6 percent interest rate, up from March's 5-7/8 percent.

DATE EXTENDED
FOR PROGRAM
PAYMENTS

The U.S. Department of Agriculture has extended to April 17 the final date by which Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation county offices must determine eligibility of individuals or other entities for payments under 1987 farm programs. The reason for the extension from April 1 to April 17 was heavy workloads at county ASCS offices that received a large number of applications for both the 1987 farm programs and the Conservation Reserve Program.

TESTING NEW
INSPECTION
SYSTEM

The U.S. Department of Agriculture will test a new inspection system for meat and poultry processing plants in which the intensity of inspection may vary from plant to plant, depending on its type of operation and record of compliance with federal inspection regulations. The Processed Products Inspection Improvement Act of 1986 allows the USDA to reduce levels of inspection in some processing plants that meet strict guidelines. Daily inspection will still be required in slaughter plants.

TERMINATED
COWS

An estimated 8,700 head of dairy cattle were slaughtered in federally-inspected plants during the week ending March 13 as a result of the Dairy Termination Program, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture. The cumulative total of cattle slaughtered under the program from April 1 through March 13 is an estimated 1,032,300 head. Dairy cattle reported for export under the program for the period of April 1 through March 27 totaled an estimated 55,055 head. Live cattle exports are in addition to meat purchase requirements.

FARMERS LEAVING
AGRICULTURE

The number of farmers now leaving agriculture is small by historical standards. The net decline in number of farmers has averaged less than 40,000 per year since 1980, compared with about 120,000 per year between 1960 and 1980, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Many farmers in the postwar period stopped farming because mechanization and lower profit margins made small-scale farming unprofitable and because urban job prospects were bright. By contrast, today's distressed farmers are victims of a dramatic shift in world supply and demand conditions.

ANIMAL WELFARE
ACT

The U.S. Department of Agriculture proposed amendments to its regulations under the Animal Welfare Act, including one that would require research facilities to create special committees to assure humane care and treatment of laboratory animals regulated under the Act. Other proposed changes involve registration and recordkeeping, identification of animals, methods of obtaining animals, licensing procedures, and an increase in license and application fees.

CORN STOCKS

Corn stored in all positions on March 1, 1987, is estimated by the U.S. Department of Agriculture at 8 billion 250 million bushels. Of the total stocks, 5 billion 20 million were stored on the farm, and 3 billion 220 million were stored off the farm.

ALL WHEAT
STOCKS

All wheat stored in all positions on March 1, 1987, is estimated by the U.S. Department of Agriculture at 2 billion 250 million bushels. The off-farm stocks are placed at 1 billion 460 million...on-farm storage accounts for 796 million bushels.

FROM OUR
TELEVISION
SERVICE

GENERIC COMMODITY CERTIFICATES...Provisions in the 1985 Farm Security Act allow the U.S. Department of Agriculture to issue generic commodity certificates to be used as payment under several programs. USDA economist Michael Hanthorn talks about the impact of these certificates. DeBoria Janifer interviews. (161)

WIND EROSION UPDATE...Nearly 3.7 million acres of land in the Great Plains states have been damaged by wind this year, 300,000 acres more than reported at this time last year. Tom George with USDA's Soil Conservation Service talks about the increase in wind damage. DeBoria Janifer interviews. (162)

WORLD AGRICULTURAL OUTLOOK...Global population growth outpaced food production last year, causing per capita output to decline nearly two percent. USDA economist Cecil Davison focuses on these and other factors contributing to the current outlook for world agriculture. Vic Powell interviews. (163)

FOREIGN OWNERSHIP OF U.S. LAND...USDA attorney Peter DeBraal takes a look at the increase in foreign ownership of U.S. land, including factors that are making U.S. land attractive to foreign buyers and whether or not there is increased foreign interest in acquiring cropland. Vic Powell interviews. (164)

BIOTECHNOLOGY AND AGRICULTURE...The use of biotechnology is now being applied to agriculture in many ways. Terry Medley with USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service talks about the new staff coordinating the Department's regulatory activities on biotechnology. Marlene Stinson interviews. (165)



FROM OUR RADIO
SERVICE

AGRITAPE/FARM PROGRAM REPORT #1546...(Weekly reel of news features) USDA news highlights; Getting into exporting; Too much coffee; New name for beef.

CONSUMER TIME #1039...(Weekly reel of 2½-3 min features) USDA addresses salmonella problem; Food safety advice; Lots of coffee; Label change on meat packages; Fertilizing your trees.

AGRICULTURE USA #1558...(Weekly 13½ min documentary) Millions of gallons of paint and other toxic materials are disposed of improperly each year creating problems for the water supply. George Holmes has this report.

USDA RADIO NEWS SERVICE...Tues, Apr. 7, Weekly crop and weather; Thurs, Apr. 9, World agriculture supply demand, USSR grain situation, Crop production; Fri, Apr. 10, Vegetables, World crop production, World oilseed production, World cotton production, World grain production, World tobacco production. Dial the USDA National News Line 202-488-8358 or 8359. All material changed at 5 p.m. ET each working day.

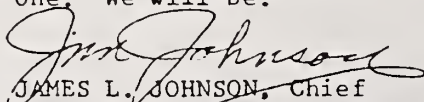
OFF MIKE

Welcome visitor walked through the door about the time we started writing this: Gary Truitt (Indiana Agri-Business Net, Indianapolis). He was in town with a group of cattlemen visiting their legislators and Sec'y of Agric Richard Lyng and others at USDA ... Pam Geppert is the new farm broadcaster at WOWO, Fort Wayne, IN. She joined the WOWO staff the first of January and replaced Dave Russell who is now with the Indiana Farm Bureau. Pam graduated from South Dakota State University with a degree in ag journalism ... Joe Jarvis (WCVL, Crawfordsville, IN, is wearing a new hat these days. Well, actually another hat. He is now the station manager. But he's still continuing his farm shows. Our congratulations on the new post ... Matt Fleck is the new farm broadcaster at WTHI, Terre Haute, IN. He took the place of Jim Fleming who left the station earlier this year ... Kathleen Lonergan (Arkansas Radio Net, Little Rock) has been named Arkansas' Outstanding Young Woman of the Year. She was chosen on the basis of her

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professional achievements and service to her community. Since Kathleen produced a lot of hours of programming while she was on our staff, we're justifiably proud. Our congratulations! ... Carl "Andy" Anderson will step down from his management position at KMA, Shenandoah, IA, April 30. He has been general manager at the station since 1971 and was appointed a vice president of the May Broadcasting Company in 1980. Andy says he'll remain active at KMA as a tour director, legislative liaison and consultant ... Lots of information starting to come out about regional NAFB meetings. Hope you're planning to attend at least one. We will be.


JAMES L. JOHNSON, Chief
Radio and Television Division